

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the present amendment and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-10 and 12-14 are pending. In the present amendment, Claims 15-17 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. No new matter is added.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 15-17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph; Claim 17 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph; Claims 15-17 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Japanese Patent Publication No. 10-138243 to Mitsuo et al. (hereinafter “Mitsuo”); and Claims 1-10 and 12-14 were allowed. Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication of allowed subject matter.

In response to the outstanding rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112, first and second paragraphs, and 35 U.S.C. §103(a), it is noted that Claims 15-17 are canceled by the present amendment. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that these rejections are moot.

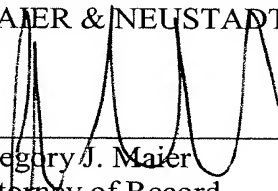
This amendment is submitted in accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.116 which, after final rejection, permits entering of amendments canceling claims, complying with any requirement of form expressly set forth in a previous Office Action, or presenting rejected claims in better form for consideration on appeal. The present amendment cancels Claims 15-17. Therefore, this amendment only includes subject matter which was earlier presented. Thus, no new matter has been added, and this amendment does not raise new issues requiring further consideration and/or search. It is therefore respectfully requested that the present amendment be entered under 37 C.F.R. §1.116.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. A Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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